

HEALTH LITERACY



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Health

Tips for Health Managers from the Head Start National Center on Health

What Is Health Literacy?



Health literacy is how well someone is able to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and health care services to make good health choices.

Health literacy includes the ability to read and understand:

- Prescriptions
- Directions
- Medical forms
- Patient education materials

Why Is It Important?

Health literacy is important because it affects people's ability to:

- Use healthcare services
- Ask questions and share information
- Take care of themselves and family members
- Manage diseases like asthma and diabetes
- Change unhealthy behaviors
- Follow through on medical advice

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10 things you should know

- 1 All health information should be easy to read and given to families in their "home language."
- 2 Know your families and their health needs.
- 3 Know your families':
 - Language needs
 - Level of education
 - Cultural backgrounds
- 4 Help all families feel at ease if they need help by:
 - Keeping information short and simple
 - Asking everyone if they need help filling out forms
 - Making it easy for parents to ask for help in different ways such as phone, in person, notes, or through a friend or family member
- 5 Help families set goals that promote health. For example, talk with them about adding more fruits and vegetables to their meals or increasing their physical activity in small ways. Work with your families to understand and overcome the barriers they see to reaching these goals.
- 6 Create a health literacy action plan for your agency that includes:
 - A review of written materials for ease and reading levels
 - Feedback from families about what works
 - Feedback from staff about what works
- 7 Model healthy eating and physical activity habits. Make sure your program's wellness and nutrition policies are available to families in a way that makes sense to them.
- 8 Plan a workshop on health literacy for your staff and for your health service advisory council.
- 9 Make sure your health messages are understood by doing the following:
 - Focus on key points and repeat
 - Listen actively
 - Ask families to "teach back" what they have heard
 - Confirm verbal messages with written information and pictures
 - Encourage questions by asking "What questions do you have for me?" instead of "Do you have any questions?"
- 10 If possible, attend a health literacy course. This will:
 - Help you learn more about health and health promotion
 - Help with family engagement
 - Assist you in helping parents become better first-line caretakers when their children are sick. This helps to avoid unnecessary trips to the emergency room and missing school or work

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Supporting health literacy includes:

- Being aware of literacy and language needs
- Helping parents understand basic health information
- Modeling skills and actions that help parents and children make healthy choices
- Helping parents understand their role in the health of their children
- Providing resources and education

Adults with low health literacy are more likely to:

- Be in poor health
- Make mistakes taking medicine
- Spend more time in the hospital
- Have higher health care costs
- Have more days of lost work because of illness

Children of caregivers with low health literacy are more likely to:

- Be sick more often
- Not get the care they need
- Have unhealthy behaviors
- Have trouble with illnesses like asthma and diabetes
- Miss more days of school

Low health literacy is greater among people:

- With low incomes
- With limited education
- From minority populations
- With limited English proficiency (LEP)
- Who are older adults

Key Resources for Head Start Managers

National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy: <http://www.health.gov/communication/hlactionplan/>

How to create clear communications: http://pilot.train.hrsa.gov/uhc/pdf/module_02_job_aid_clear_health_comm_checklist.pdf

IOM reports on health literacy:

- <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2004/Health-Literacy-A-Prescription-to-End-Confusion.aspx>
- <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2009/Health-Literacy-eHealth-and-Communication-Putting-the-Consumer-First-Workshop-Summary.aspx>

CDC Health Literacy: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/>

UCLA Health Care Institute: <http://www.anderson.ucla.edu/x682.xml>



HEALTHY ACTIVE LIVING



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What Is Healthy Active Living?

Healthy active living includes eating healthy foods, staying physically active, and getting enough rest. Developing healthy habits starts in early childhood. Eating well and being physically active helps a child continue to grow and learn.

Why Is It Important?

Research tells us that the way young children eat, move, and sleep can impact their weight now and in the future. Early childhood is an ideal time to start healthy habits before unhealthy patterns are set. It's never too early to start:

- Encouraging breastfeeding for at least the first 6 months of life
- Eating healthy meals and snacks
- Spending time each day moving and being active
- Developing good sleep practices and patterns

Healthy Active Living and Head Start

Young children depend on parents, caregivers, and others to provide environments that foster and shape healthy habits. Head Start centers have a responsibility to promote growth and development, make healthy foods available, and provide safe spaces for active play. Staff can help children and families by encouraging and modeling healthy eating and physical activity at the center and by providing suggestions for small, healthy steps at home.

5-2-1-0 programs are helping many communities to have healthy active lives by promoting four simple strategies for families. Many states have created materials for families, child care centers, and workplaces and they are often available in multiple languages. These resources are widely available on the Internet and free for others to replicate and use.

10 things you should know

- 1 Physical health can impact a child's readiness to learn. If a child is hungry, tired, or physically uncomfortable, she may be less able to pay attention, manage her feelings, and remember what she learns.
- 2 Health considerations should be included in data analysis for child assessment and outcome analysis. Children who are hungry, tired, or ill might not be able to demonstrate their true skills and knowledge.
- 3 Children with consistent access to healthy food are more likely to develop appropriately and have the energy to learn.
- 4 Terms like healthy habits, healthy active living, and healthy weight can be used instead of "obese," "obesity," or "overweight," words many parents don't like to hear associated with young children.
- 5 Babies who are breastfed for at least 6 months are more likely to grow up with a healthy weight.
- 6 Many parents find it hard to set limits on sugary beverages, especially juice. Even 100% fruit juice has sugar that can damage teeth.
- 7 An hour of active play might seem like a lot, but it doesn't have to be all at one time. Parents and teachers can find ways to help children be active for 10–15 minutes several times each day.
- 8 Weather or safety can be a challenge for children to play outdoors. Parents may look to Head Start staff to provide creative ideas for safe and active indoor play.
- 9 Programs can share information with families about low-cost, seasonal fruits and vegetables, with ideas for how to prepare them in a healthy way.
- 10 Parents can strategize with each other and staff for ideas to get children to try new foods and be active at home.



- 5 Eat at least 5 fruits and vegetables a day.
- 2 Keep screen time (like TV, video games, computer) down to 2 hours or less per day.
- 1 Get 1 hour or more of physical activity every day.
- 0 Drink 0 sugar-sweetened drinks. Replace soda pop, sports drinks and even 100% fruit juice with milk or water.

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Key Resources for Head Start Managers

Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Policies from the Institute of Medicine: http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13124

Let's Move! Child Care <http://healthykidshealthyfuture.org>.

HealthyChildren.org <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/>

Healthy Child Care America <http://www.healthychildcare.org/>

Head Start resources on nutrition <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/Health/Nutrition>

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Healthy Eating Research <http://www.healthyeatingresearch.org/>

National Institute for Children's Healthcare Quality http://www.nichq.org/childhood_obesity/index.html



HEALTHY BREATHING



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How Can Programs Support Healthy Breathing for Children?

Head Start programs can help children breathe more easily by:

- Teaching staff and parents about the signs and symptoms of asthma
- Educating staff and parents about secondhand smoke and its connection to asthma
- Sharing knowledge about ways to avoid asthma triggers or attacks

Why Is It Important?

- Every place children spend time should be smoke free, all of the time.
- Secondhand smoke can be avoided and is a trigger for asthma.
- Cigarette smoke has more than 7,000 chemicals, including some that can cause cancer.
- Thirdhand smoke is a danger to children.

What Is Secondhand Smoke?

Secondhand smoke is environmental tobacco smoke. It is the smoke breathed in from the tips of cigarettes, pipes and cigars.

What Is Thirdhand Smoke?

Thirdhand smoke is smoke that stays on surfaces and fabric after a person is done smoking. Staff who smoke should make sure they have clean clothes to wear when they are working with Head Start children. Chemicals from tobacco smoke can stay on clothes for days or weeks.

What Is Asthma?

Asthma is a condition that causes a swelling and narrowing of the airways in humans. Asthma can cause wheezing, coughing, chest pains, and tiredness.



10 things you should know

- 1 Secondhand smoke is never safe. Because children are smaller and still growing, secondhand smoke is even more dangerous.
- 2 Thirdhand smoke is never safe. Adults who know the dangers of thirdhand smoke are more likely to not allow smoking in their home.
- 3 The most important thing families can do to help a child with asthma is to have a smoke-free home.
- 4 Asthma is the third most common reason for a child to be in the hospital.
- 5 Secondhand smoke can cause children with asthma to have more frequent and more severe asthma attacks.
- 6 Being near secondhand smoke can cause children without asthma to have asthma-like symptoms such as wheezing.
- 7 Secondhand smoke can cause infections like bronchitis and pneumonia.
- 8 Every year, children in the U.S. miss 10.5 million school days because of asthma.
- 9 Chemicals from tobacco smoke (thirdhand smoke) may stay in the environment for days or weeks after a cigarette is put out.
- 10 Pediatricians can help parents and staff members prevent exposure to secondhand smoke by helping them quit smoking.

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Key Resources for Head Start Managers

American Academy of Pediatrics. *Schooled in Asthma*. Retrieved from: <http://www2.aap.org/schooledinasthma/>

American Academy of Pediatrics Julius B Richmond Center. *Educators*. Retrieved from: <http://www2.aap.org/richmondcenter/Educators.html>

This resources provide educators with lesson plans, statistics, and activities to help prevent tobacco use among America's youth.

American Lung Association. *Asthma Friendly Schools Toolkit*. Retrieved from: <http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/asthma/creating-asthma-friendly-environments/asthma-in-schools/asthma-friendly-schools-initiative/asthma-friendly-schools-initiative-toolkit.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Asthma: School and Child Care Providers*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/schools.html>

Head Start. *Legacy–The Head Start Tobacco Cessation Initiative*. Retrieved from: http://www.legacyforhealth.org/PDF/HeadStart_CessationToolkit.pdf

Oregon Head Start Association, American Lung Association of Oregon. *Tobacco-Free Environments*. Retrieved from: <http://www2.aap.org/richmondcenter/pdfs/ModelTobaccoFreePolicyforHeadStart.pdf> The policy is available as a model for those seeking to create their own policy on tobacco-free Head Start and other child care facilities.



MENTAL HEALTH



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What Is Early Childhood Mental Health?

Early childhood mental health (birth to 5 years) is a child's growing capacity to do these things, all in the cultural context of family and community (adapted from ZERO TO THREE):

- Experience, regulate, and express emotions
- Develop close, secure, relationships
- Explore the surroundings and learn.

Early childhood mental health is the same as social emotional development.

Why Is It Important?

Mental health is important because it affects a child's ability to:

- Express their needs
- Pay attention
- Solve problems
- Get along with others
- Follow directions
- Persist when challenged
- Manage their emotions
- Take initiative
- Be curious and interested in learning



Mental Health Services in EHS/HS Include:

- Promotion—helping all children to feel good about themselves, to get along with others and to manage their behavior
- Prevention—reducing the likelihood that children will develop mental health problems and reducing the impact of mental health problems that do exist
- Early Identification—paying attention to mental health problems early on
- Treatment—obtaining the appropriate help for children with mental health problems

Mental Health and School Readiness

Children's mental health is critical to their later school success.

- Children who are able to follow directions and pay attention are able to focus on learning.
- Children who can express their feelings are able to get help when they need it.
- Children who learn to persist when frustrated can overcome challenges.
- Children who feel good about themselves are able to work on their own.
- Children who can control their behavior are able to stay on task.

10 things you should know

- 1 Mental health is an essential part of health.
- 2 The mental health of young children is linked to the well-being of the people who care for them.
- 3 Promoting the mental health of infants and young children can make a positive difference for years to come.
- 4 Positive relationships support positive mental health.
- 5 Culture plays an important role in young children's mental health and in how families view mental health and behavior.
- 6 The more staff and families know about mental health the better they are able to support it.
- 7 Addressing mental health concerns when children are young is more effective than waiting until they are older.
- 8 Mental health must be an integral part of Early Head Start and Head Start.
- 9 Each Head Start program is required to have a mental health professional on-site on a regular basis.
- 10 Programs that focus on mental health are able to design services that improve children's behavior.

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Key Resources for Head Start Managers

Center on the Social Emotional Foundations of Early Childhood (CSEFEL). <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/> This website offers extensive, user-friendly training materials, videos, and print resources to help early care, health, and education providers promote children's social emotional development.

Head Start. *Mental Health*. Retrieved from: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/Mental%20Health/Program%20Planning,%20Design%20%26%20Management/Staff%20Support/Bulletin80.htm> This bulletin includes some of the most current strategies and approaches to mental health in Head Start.

Head Start. *Early Childhood Mental Health in Early Head Start and Head Start: View On-Demand Webcast*.

Retrieved from: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/resources/video/Early%20Childhood%20Mental%20Health%20in%20Early%20Head%20Start%20and%20Head%20Start%20Webcast/EarlyChildhoodM.htm>

This webcast explores resources that help programs improve mental health services and discover the importance of relationships to a child's development.

Institute of Medicine.
<http://nationalacademies.org/nrc/>

National Research Council.
<http://nationalacademies.org/nrc/>

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child.
<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/activities/council/>

Zero to Three.
<http://www.zerotothree.org/>

Key Resources to Share With Families:

ZERO TO THREE's family resources. These resources address some of the most common (and challenging) issues facing parents of babies and toddlers. <http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/funded-projects/parenting-resources/podcast/>

Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation for Families. This site provides practical tools to help families build positive relationships with their children. http://www.ecmhc.org/materials_families.html



ORAL HEALTH



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How Can You Promote Good Oral Health?

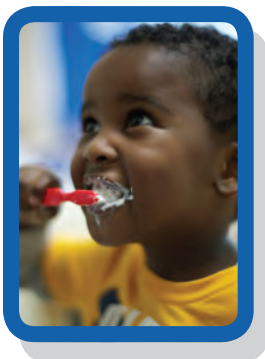
- Help parents and caregivers learn how to ensure good oral health for children and themselves.
- Help pregnant women and children learn good mouth and teeth habits.

Oral Health Plays a Key Role in the Health of Children

- Good oral health means better growth and development.
- Poor oral health can lead to eating and speaking problems.
- Pain and not wanting to eat because of tooth decay can lead to poor food choices and delayed development.
- Oral pain can make children fussy or withdrawn.
- Oral pain can make it hard to focus and learn.
- Oral pain can mean more missed days of school.
- Children who do not have oral pain learn more.

Oral Health Plays a Key Role in the Health of Pregnant Women

- Pain, shame, and not wanting to eat because of tooth decay can lead to poor food choices.
- Oral pain can make it hard to focus.
- Stained, broken, or missing teeth can make women feel bad about how they look.
- Good oral health during pregnancy means a good start for future oral health.



10 things you should know

- 1** Tooth decay is preventable. Tooth decay occurs when bacteria on teeth consume sugar to produce an acid that breaks down tooth mineral (demineralization). Fluoride use, good eating and feeding habits, good oral health habits, and regular dental visits work together to help prevent tooth decay.
- 2** Tooth decay is the most common disease in children. It is more common in children than obesity and asthma.
- 3** Head Start children, like many children from families with low incomes, have more tooth decay and oral pain than children from families with higher incomes.
- 4** The bacteria that can cause tooth decay can be passed from person to person in many ways:
 - When a parent or caregiver puts a child's pacifier in her mouth to clean it
 - When a parent or caregiver shares food, spoons, or forks with a child
 - When a child puts her hand in a parent's or caregiver's mouth
- 5** Eating and feeding habits play a key role in the cause of tooth decay.
 - Each time a food or drink is consumed, the teeth are exposed to acid for about 20 to 40 minutes.
 - If a child eats foods and drinks all day long, teeth will have acids on them for long periods, increasing the child's risk for tooth decay.
- 6** Fluoride prevents tooth decay.
 - The amount of fluoride toothpaste that should be put onto a child's toothbrush is a smear for infants and children younger than age 2 years and a pea-size amount for children age 2 years and older.
 - Children should not rinse after brushing their teeth so that the small amount of fluoride in the toothpaste remaining in their mouth has more time to strengthen the outer layers of the teeth.
 - Parents or caregivers should brush child's teeth or help the child brush. Young children will want to brush their own teeth, but they need help until their hand coordination is better. Brush children's teeth or help children brush their teeth until they are about age 7 to 8 years.

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- 7 Parents or caregivers should clean their infant's teeth and gums regularly with a clean damp washcloth or a toothbrush with soft bristles and a small head made for infants. Infants should have their first dental visit by age 1 year.
- 8 It is safe for pregnant women to get oral health care.
- 9 If not treated, pregnancy gingivitis (gums that are sore, puffy, red, and bleed easily) can lead to periodontal (gum) disease and tooth loss. It is important for pregnant women to brush their teeth at least twice a day and floss once a day before bedtime to keep their teeth and gums healthy.
- 10 During pregnancy, women should eat healthy foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole-grain products, low-fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry, eggs, beans, and nuts. If they eat foods high in sugar, they should do so at mealtimes only.

Key Resources for Head Start Managers

Bertness, J., Holt, K., eds. (2012). *Oral Health in Head Start: A Resource Guide* (2nd ed.). Washington, D.C.: National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center. Retrieved from: <http://www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/HeadStartResourceGuide.pdf>

Clark, M., Holt, K. (2008). *Dental Hygienists and Head Start: What You Should Know and How You Can Help*. Washington, D.C.: National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center. Retrieved from: <http://www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/HSRDH.pdf>

Holt, K. (2011). *Dentists and Head Start: What You Should Know and How You Can Help*. Washington, D.C.: National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center. Retrieved from: <http://www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/HSDentists.pdf>

Holt, K., Barzel, R. (2004). *Open Wide: Oral Health Training for Health Professionals*. Washington, D.C.: National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center. Retrieved from: <http://www.mchoralhealth.org/OpenWide/index.htm>

Holt, K., Lowe, E. (2011). *Medical Providers and Head Start: What You Should Know About Oral Health and How You Can Help*. Washington, D.C.: National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center. Retrieved from: http://www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/HS_med.pdf

Lowe, E., Holt, K. (2009). *Be an Oral Health Champion*. Washington, D.C.: National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center. Retrieved from: <http://www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/Champion.pdf>

Lowe, E.; National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center; Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Oral Health; Head Start Oral Health Workgroup. (2012). *Oral Health for Maryland's Kids: A Head Start Teacher's Guide for Creating Healthy Smiles*. Washington, D.C.: National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center. Retrieved from: <http://www.mchoralhealth.org/OHMDKids>



SAFETY AND INJURY PREVENTION



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What Is Safety and Injury Prevention?

Safety and injury prevention for young children includes:

- Creating safe environments for children based on their development and skills
- Training staff to watch children individually and in groups
- Educating parents and staff on how to recognize risks, predict what a child might do, and redirect children
- Teaching children how to make safe choices
- Using injury and incident data to reduce injuries and promote safety

Why Is It Important?

- Injury prevention works.
- Children like to explore! Safety equipment, such as gates and locks, prevents children from exploring dangerous areas.
- Safety does not come naturally to children. They need adults to role-model and explain safe behaviors to help them learn.



10 things you should know

Overall

- 1 It is everyone's job to create a safe environment.
- 2 You can use injury and incident data to find, fix and prevent problems.

In a center or family child care home

- 3 Staff should use safety checks as part of their daily routines to find, remove or repair any hazards.
- 4 Active supervision helps to ensure that staff observe, monitor, and anticipate children's behavior to keep children safe.

Outside

- 5 Program managers should teach staff and parents how to identify safety risks outside.
- 6 Staff members should teach children and parents pedestrian safety so they know how to stay safe near streets and intersections.

On the go

- 7 Developing systems for scanning and counting children often and consistently helps to guarantee that no child is left on a bus.
- 8 Including bus monitors and bus drivers in transportation planning helps keep children safe on buses.

At home

- 9 Home visitors and family service workers can use home safety checks to partner with parents to make homes safe.
- 10 Programs should use community partners to provide families with resources and information to keep their homes safe.

Key Resources for Head Start Managers

National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. (2011). *Caring for our children*. Retrieved from: <http://nrckids.org/CFOC3/>

Program Design

http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/Health/Environmental%20Health%20and%20Safety/Environmental%20Healthy%20and%20Safety%20Program%20Staff/manage_pub_00302a2_091205.html

Program Safety Check: A Learning Activity

http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/Health/Environmental%20Health%20and%20Safety/Environmental%20Healthy%20and%20Safety%20Program%20Staff/health_lea_11021_022806.html